

December 13, 2005

TO: State Superintendent Jack O'Connell
California Department of Education

FR: Sal Villasenor, Legislative Advocate
Sherry Skelly Griffith, Legislative Advocate

RE: **ACSA Recommendations of CAHSEE Options and Alternatives
for December 15, 2005 Public Meeting**

ACSA understands the goal of the meeting on December 15, 2005 is to share and discuss "alternatives we believe would constitute a method by which students may demonstrate their competency on the standards covered on the CAHSEE at the same level of rigor as the CAHSEE." There has been very limited time to thoroughly consult and develop recommendations, but these are our initial thoughts. We will be exploring other alternatives as well.

The following recommendations are based on two important principles:

1. Any alternatives to CAHSEE must only be considered after all other efforts and interventions have proven unsuccessful. School districts must ensure they are focused on interventions that relate directly to the failed portions of CAHSEE.
2. That access to CAHSEE and the opportunity to learn the CAHSEE material in a variety of creative ways is absolutely critical and must take precedent over state Department resistance to change CAHSEE test administrations, excessive concern with test security, or lack of state support for funding additional CAHSEE administrations.

ACSA Recommendations:

I. Strengthen Access to CAHSEE and CAHSEE Test Results

- Immediately commence with a *July Summer Administration* of CAHSEE and fund its availability at school districts, county offices of education, and GED testing centers. Waiting until September is too late and too far from summer intervention courses.
- Allow for retesting whenever a district chooses to do so when a student misses one part of the test. Do not require students to wait until the next test administration

- For seniors who take the test in May there must be a *two-week turnaround*. The CAHSEE contractor must score these students first and get the results back to school districts so they may graduate if they pass.
- Do not deny special education students who use modifications to pass the CAHSEE from receiving their diploma.
- Explore putting CAHSEE on-line.

Alternatives to CAHSEE

I. CAHSEE Course and CAHSEE End of Course Exams

Fund CAHSEE administrations that can be given by schools as “end of course” exams. This may involve courses specifically geared to CAHSEE in part, or in whole, or as part of a more comprehensive course in math or reading/language arts. *Allow school districts to determine when these CAHSEE administrations are given.*

II. Standardized State Waiver Process

Under very limited circumstances, ACSA could support a standardized state waiver process in which the State Board allows school districts to grant diplomas to certain special education students. The primary group we see under a waiver process are special education students who have the right to use modifications to take CAHSEE and they pass using those modifications (i.e. a student using a calculator on the math portion, based on their IEP).

III. Certificate of Completion

We believe school districts must retain the authority to grant Certificates of Completion adding two conditions which may need to be implemented in statute:

1. That a student who is granted a Certificate of Completion be required to fulfill all other local graduation requirements.
2. That school districts be required to develop policies regarding the Certificate of Completion and that the policy include how they recognize students of different ability levels, and how those students achieved a prescribed set of standards; including STAR scores, grade point averages, school attendance, and any other locally adopted criteria or alternative systems of identifying academic competence.